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A better way

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desert Ireland

BY

SIR HORACE PLUNKETT.

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PREFACE.

It has caused surprise that Irishmen, who know their country intimately and outside of politics are trying to serve it, have taken so small a part in the discussion upon the political crisis which threatens the undoing of all their work. The explanation is simple. A political situation dominated and strangely controlled by two hundred thousand armed men who in the North have already usurped the primary function of government seemed hardly within the sphere of private initiative. Peaceful folk expected that the British Government would think it proper to exercise a little more authority in Ireland than it was called upon to assert in Mexico or Albania. Then, again, we have been kept quiet by assurances that the leaders in Parliament were negotiating behind the scenes, and that a settlement was in sight. Although we have often felt that we could fill up some striking gaps in the arguments which were being used, we were unwilling to raise fresh issues for fear of embarrassing the peace-makers. Now, however, the introduction of the Amending Bill, and the acceptance of its main principle by the House of Lords have created a situation which it would take some ingenuity to make worse. The Government and the Opposition have agreed that the partition of Ireland is inevitable, and down

PREFACE.

this blind alley the search for peace is to be pursued. The architects of the new Ireland seem like town-planners who neglect sanitation, recreation and convenience, but barricade the streets. Both sides condemn the vicious policy with equal emphasis, each justifying it only as an alternative to the threatened calamity for which, of course, the other is responsible. Neither side in England, nor the Ulster Covenanters (for whose good will a temporary mutilation of Ireland is offered and a permanent dismemberment demanded) seem to have devoted much thought to the specific reasons why the policy is bad in principle and must be disastrous in operation. If these things are understood in Ulster and in England we may yet be saved from a step which will proclaim to the world the bankruptcy of British statesmanship in Ireland. Such is my excuse for not writing before and my justification for writing now.

HORACE PLUNKETT.

KILTERAGH, FOXROCK, CO. DUBLIN.

July 20, 1914.

A BETTER WAY.

The Comedy of Errors.

It is hard for an Irishman to write with moderation on the present crisis. The introduction of a Bill to provide for the peace and good government of Ireland has induced the inhabitants of that part of the country to which peace and good government are of most importance to take up arms with a view to forcible resistance. The Government, after contemplating this phenomenon for two years, have proposed modifications of the Bill unpleasing to themselves, in order to satisfy the insurgents. The insurgents are not satisfied, and will not lay down their arms. The inhabitants of the rest of the country, being satisfied that forcible resistance will not be suppressed, are taking up arms, presumably in order to suppress it themselves, and civil war seems imminent. The House of Lords has proposed amendments of the Government's modifications, unsatisfactory both to itself and to the Government. A conference is apparently to be held between the Government and the Opposition, but no one knows on what basis of negotiation. Constitutional methods have, it seems, broken down in London, and there appears to be no serious suggestion of trying them in Ireland. Mr. Balfour, philosophically surveying the maze of false issues in which the politicians are manœuvring for position, has aptly described the situation as one in which "everyone is in a hole."

Lord Lansdowne's invitation: an Irish acceptance.

When the Amendment Bill embodying the Government's concessions to the Opposition was in the House of Lords, it was seen to be a piece of freak legislation which even its authors admitted to be a mere makeshift expedient. Its beneficent purpose would be served if, in a country where nobody wants to fight, it prevented civil war—a calamity which it was not unlikely to provoke. If the poison of partition was any remedy for the Irish disease, the Lords may have been right to give the maximum dose. But Lord Lansdowne, who knows Ireland, has little faith in the prescription, and called upon all and sundry to suggest some rational treatment. "If," he said in the debate on the Second Reading of the Amendment Bill, "at the eleventh hour the Noble Marquis* opposite, or, indeed, anybody else, were to offer a better way we would be ready to explore it." The invitation is wide enough to include myself, and the eleventh hour has come. I propose, therefore, to submit for the consideration of my fellow-countrymen a better and an Irish way.

That the better way must be found in Ireland or not at all is my firm belief. Although British and Imperial interests are gravely imperilled, the trouble has arisen mainly from ignoring, or, perhaps, from failing to understand, the Irish facts. Before, through the blunders of other people, we rush into civil war and shed each other's blood, can we not come together and take our fortunes into our own hands? I do not for a moment suggest that any unauthorised body of Irishmen can usurp the functions of Parliament, but an issue has now been raised upon the decision of which depends for evil or for good the future of every department of our national life. In such an emergency private initiative in public affairs must not be confined to drilling and arming.

It has been asked why, at such a crisis, a country with

* Lord Crewe.

a normal proportion of leading men in the professions and in business—a country peculiarly rich in practical philanthropic movements—does not bring forth the Irish conference or convention, for which there is a growing demand, to protest against, and offer some alternative for, the scandalous mismanagement of its affairs. The reason is, that the Irish Question as we have known it has always aroused passions which make business men unwilling to touch it; and in the sphere of philanthropic activity the best work which has been done for Ireland in recent years, and is being done now, depends for its success upon the co-operation of men on both sides of politics. While outside the work which brings them together each is free to indulge in any political activities he likes, they all hesitate to associate themselves with party conflict for fear of injuring their common efforts towards national advancement. I feel, however, that the time has now come when our leading men of affairs and social workers must come to the aid of the politician. Ireland sorely needs the counsel and advice of her best citizens, men who know their country, who see it clearly and see it whole, who possess the political imagination to grasp the British and Imperial issues involved in the Irish controversy and who, above all, have an understanding sympathy with those of their fellow-countrymen whose honest opinions are in violent conflict with their own.*

If any such unofficial intervention as now seems to be required is to be fruitful in time to save the existing situation, it is necessary to come to some common agreement as to the elements of the problem for which we have to try and find a solution. I propose in what follows to attempt a clear presentation of the crisis, to examine its main causes, and to recall the chief events which have intensified its gravity. I shall then attempt to show the vice and futility

* Since this pamphlet went to press, the King's Conference has been announced—another of the kaleidoscopic changes which have made the crisis so hard to discuss. But all that matters in what I have written relates to principles rather than to situations.

of the policy of the Amending Bill and, after a brief reference to the alternative settlements which have been proposed, show why I consider that only one of them can possibly meet the Irish needs at the present crisis. I shall conclude with an elaboration of that plan as the best way of facing the crisis and shall give my reasons for believing that it alone offers an opportunity for the heart and mind of Ireland to have their proper influence in saving our country from the threatened calamity.

The evolution of the crisis: its constitutional and party aspects.

Reduced to its simplest form the crisis may be thus stated. Three provinces of Ireland, by an overwhelming majority, demand Home Rule, and the Government are pledged to concede it. One province by a relatively small majority is bitterly opposed to Home Rule. The Government have yielded to this opposition to a certain extent. Any county in Ulster may, if a majority of its registered electors so desire, remain out of the scheme for six years. Otherwise the political situation, so far as Home Rule is concerned, is unchanged and we are committed to the fatal policy of the partition of Ireland upon the basis of religious belief. Let us trace the steps by which Parliament has been led into a course that everybody concerned literally detests.

We need not go further back than February, 1911, when Mr. Asquith met the newly-elected House of Commons with a majority of 126. His future action was subject to a condition which, obvious as it was, seems to have been overlooked. Any body of his supporters exceeding 63 in number were in a position to make and enforce their own terms as a condition of their support, because if they voted against the Government they could drive them from office. If their terms were reasonable, and in harmony with the declared policy of the Government, Mr. Asquith was bound to concede them.

Mr. Redmond, speaking for 84 sure votes, had no option but to put forward the Irish demand for a Parliament with an executive responsible to it. The Liberal Party could not say that the demand was unreasonable, nor could the Unionist Party urge that these 84 votes should be of less account than any other 84 votes. Moreover, the support of those votes has been given, and the Government have been kept in office for four years, at what many Nationalists consider a great sacrifice of Irish interests. It is manifest that the Government cannot, without a gross betrayal of their Nationalist allies, go to the country before the passage of the Home Rule Bill. The agreement, which may not have been in writing, but which was inherent in the conditions, and was acted up to on one side, was for a Parliament, not for a General Election or a referendum.

Some Unionists say that the contract was immoral and is therefore not binding. They hold that a measure affecting the constitutional relations of different parts of the United Kingdom cannot properly be forced through under such a new and untried experiment in legislation as the Parliament Act. A distinction, they say, may be fairly drawn between ordinary measures which do things, and constitutional measures which change the machinery by which things are done, the former being entirely within the competence of the legislature and the latter requiring a special appeal to the body of the electors.

I admit the force of this contention, although the demand for a General Election is weakened by the frank avowal of the Ulster Unionists that it would not alter their resolve or lessen their resistance if it went against them. In any case, unless I have wholly misstated the political facts which caused the crisis, the Government are not in a position to interrupt the progress of the Home Rule Bill to the Statute Book under the Parliament Act. I blame them for not having made the nature and extent of their commitment clear; and here I think they showed the lack of political imagination.

tion to which I attribute the present *impasse*. They should have foreseen that the Ulstermen who are armed to resist their policy would genuinely believe that the Parliament Act had no other meaning or purpose whatsoever except to trick them out of their constitutional resistance to Home Rule. Every one of these men is a Hampden to himself, and, though I think they are wrong, I confess to an admiration for the spirit they have shown. Had the Government frankly recognised and publicly acknowledged the position occupied by Mr. Redmond with his 84 votes in 1911, it may be that much would have been said—though not, perhaps, more than *was* said—about American dollars and Irish dictation. But if the political facts raised an awkward question they supplied a conclusive answer. The only alternative to the acceptance of Mr. Redmond's terms was the resignation of the Government. Mr. Balfour, who was then leading the Opposition, could have been safely challenged to form a ministry since an immediate General Election would have been required to enable him to retain office. A third appeal to the country in a little over twelve months would have angered the electorate and would, in all probability, have immensely increased the majority of the Home Rule coalition.

The political situation thus created, not really by the Government but by the electorate in 1910, was not generally appreciated in the United Kingdom, and was wholly misunderstood in Ulster. In both there was a failure to realise that whatever the electors may or may not have intended about Home Rule, the Parliament Act had to be used to force through a Home Rule Bill or else it could not be used at all. Hence, Unionists on both sides of the Irish Sea resented the apparent subservience of the Government to the Irish group. They also believed that the demand for Home Rule in Ireland was dying, if not dead, and that the defeat or withdrawal of the Bill would have no evil consequences which need be weighed against the danger of its enforcement

in Ulster. Here, I believe, they were wholly mistaken, and as this doubt about the demand for Home Rule affects not only the merits of the party controversy but the far more important question of what is to be done, I will give my opinion upon the issue for what it is worth.

The truth about the Home Rule sentiment in Ireland.

If I know my countrymen, their historic political craving survives so surely that an election held to-day upon Home Rule would result, in Ireland, in precisely the same Home Rule majority as the country now returns. The only difference in the sentiment is that those who regard local self-government as a stepping stone to complete separation are a rapidly decreasing minority. The impression that the people no longer care whether they get Home Rule is easily explained. Until the last few weeks, when the threatened dismemberment of Ireland led to the rise of the National Volunteers to counteract the political pressure exercised by the Ulster force, the question was regarded in the South and West as practically settled. Land purchase, agricultural co-operation, the foot and mouth disease, and such practical matters were much more live issues. Still more misleading was the modern political attitude of the Irish farmer. Before 1903, when he was asked what was the material, as distinct from the sentimental advantage of Home Rule, he always replied, "we shall get the land." Many who now accept Home Rule were in those days against it because they did not see how the essential and urgent reform of land tenure could come from an Irish Parliament, and Home Rule with an unsettled land question was to them unthinkable. Now that the Imperial Government has undertaken this great act of justice—now that one half of the tenants are owners of their farms, and the remainder are about to become so—the apparent position of Home Rule has completely changed. Many of those who were in reality fighting for the land and liberally subscribing

to the campaign funds now subscribe only under pressure. In private they will tell you that the fear of increased taxation gives them pause. Moreover, they have already, in the popularisation of local government, a large slice of Home Rule. The Agricultural Co-operative Movement is teaching them how to do many helpful things for themselves, and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction is doing many things for them, which were formerly left undone. The country is growing yearly more prosperous, and agitation loses that force which is derived from poverty not unreasonably attributed to governmental neglect. It is not to be wondered at that people, but superficially acquainted with Southern Ireland, have drawn the conclusion that the demand for Home Rule would vanish if the Irish ceased to hold the balance between English parties. But the truth, known to every man actually in touch with Irish life, is that the majority of the Irish people want, and mean to agitate until they get, Home Rule. There is no other possible explanation of the National Volunteers.

Why the status quo cannot be maintained.

But, leaving aside this aspect of the question, let me assume for argument's sake that some means other than Home Rule might be devised for dealing with Parliamentary obstruction by a very effective group of politicians, with the congestion of the nation's business and with the abnormal cost of an Irish government carried on without assistance from public opinion. The continuance of the present system may, perhaps, be practicable; but is it desirable? No estimate of the political situation in Ireland can be complete without taking into account a new case for Home Rule which, though too reasoned for platform use, appeals to many whose general sympathies are Unionist.

A profound change has come over the political, social and economic thought of the British people, which has led to a corresponding transformation in the national policy. I

refer, of course, to the abandonment of the doctrine of *laissez faire* and the growth of what may be compendiously called State socialism. If we accept democracy it is obvious that the more the Government interferes with the business and the lives of a community, the more necessary is it that the general body of citizens should have an intelligent interest in, and should feel responsibility for, the conduct of public affairs. The application by outsiders to local conditions of this new kind of legislation without an informed or interested local opinion is as extravagant as it is demoralising. The evil of external government is seen at its worst where England, a rich country with eighty per cent. of its population urban, industrial and commercial, makes laws for Ireland, a relatively poor country with over seventy per cent. of its population rural and agricultural.

It may be said that this argument, if it justifies the exclusion of rural Ireland from the government of industrial Britain, equally justifies the exclusion of industrial Ulster from the government of rural Ireland. But this contention is more specious than sound. In the first place, industrial Ulster constitutes a greater proportion of the wealth, organisation and political power of Ireland than all the rural areas of England, Scotland and Ireland constitute of the political power of the United Kingdom. The people of North-East Ulster are not inclined to allow any of their just claims to be passed over; and in an Irish Parliament the interests of Dublin, which though not very important industrially is an important commercial centre, would be allied with those of Belfast against the rural districts. In the second place, it is, unfortunately for Ireland, far less likely that urban interests in any political assembly will be sacrificed to rural than that rural will be sacrificed to urban. Urban thought is so much better developed; urban interests are so much easier to organise; the effective spokesmen of political parties are so predominantly urban in training and habits that it is hard for a rural population, even in a great majority, to get effective attention to its needs.

The results of the application of the new English policy to Ireland are only too obvious. Its first fruit, Old Age Pensions, has converted Ireland from a modest contributor to Imperial charges into a dependent upon Great Britain for the large excess in the cost of Irish Government over the Revenue the country yields. It is generally recognised that the political trend which produced Old Age Pensions and State Insurance will continue, some say with an accelerating rate of progress. A costly medical service, the feeding of children not only in school but at home, the housing of the poor, and countless other new incursions into the formerly accepted realm of private enterprise may follow in quick succession. This is all I need say to indicate the new reasons why many think the Constitutional *status quo* can no longer be maintained.

The appeal to force.

Whatever the arguments for or against Home Rule—whether or not, admitting its inevitability, the time was ripe for its enactment—certain it is that the third Home Rule Bill was introduced in circumstances calculated to raise the most fierce opposition not only in Ireland but also wherever party feeling exists throughout the United Kingdom. Yet it should not have been beyond the resources of statesmanship to confine the conflict to constitutional action. When, more than two years ago, Sir Edward Carson openly avowed the intention of the Ulster Unionists to resist by force the authority of Parliament, the Government should not have refused to take the threat seriously. They may have thought that the men for whom Sir Edward spoke were bluffing, but if so they must have been sadly misinformed.

However that may have been, they did nothing. They had only to appeal to public opinion upon the issue of the supremacy of Parliament, and they would never have drifted into a position where the issue of the army *versus* Parliament was raised. I am free to confess that, had it not been my official duty to make a close study of the Ulster psychology

in order to understand what was and what was not possible in getting Protestants and Catholics to work together in certain communities in schemes of technical instruction, I should never have realised that the centuries-old antagonism between the two races which inhabit the North-East corner of Ireland was dormant but not dead. The appearances were all the other way. A spirit of tolerance and conciliation was rapidly supervening upon the old hatreds. That spirit should have been recognised and appealed to, instead of which the Government allowed the armed opposition of Ulster to reach a point where, when at last they proposed to deal with it, they found that it was too strong for them. Finally, their confession of their inability to punish the offenders in the gun-running exploit—conducted it must be admitted with marvellous efficiency—brought it home to the South of Ireland that there was absolutely no course open to the Nationalists but an attempt to outdo the Unionists in the drilling and arming, which seemed alone to count in the politics of the hour. In the immediate future we shall have a quarter of a million drilled and armed men in the country whose preparations and organisation are for the sole purpose of extra-constitutional action. This graft of militancy upon a hitherto constitutional attitude may be regretted, but it is the inevitable and unaccountably belated corollary of the Ulster programme. It will serve a useful purpose if it brings those who are lending themselves to so-called settlements, which they frankly admit have no merit except as alternatives to civil war, to see that their tactics do not possess even that advantage.

What History will say of the crisis.

It is only too probable that the impartial historian, while recognising the failure of the Government to understand and deal with either the constitutional or the military—more properly, perhaps, the police—situation, will also condemn the Opposition in both Houses for having lacked the

patriotic insight which the crisis demanded. He will note that in the House of Commons their destructive criticism was very effective; in particular, Mr. Balfour ripped the Bill to pieces, and was never answered. But what was really needed was a reconstruction of the Bill, based on the recognition that some measure of Home Rule there must be; and this was not forthcoming. In the House of Lords the majority who are now actually committed to Home Rule by accepting exclusion, were still more bound to give the Bill a second reading and then reconstruct it; they abandoned their duty as legislators when they threw it out. The Opposition will, therefore, be made to share with the Government the responsibility for the present situation. But neither shall we in Ireland be held to have been exempt from responsibility. If the Bill is a bad one—and I mean no disrespect to the members of the Government who have blessed it when I say that it satisfies no one in Ireland—its authors might reasonably claim that it is as good as they could be expected to produce without Irish assistance. The Nationalist Parliamentary Party are elected to fight for Home Rule, which they have done effectively, if not in the best possible way, and not to frame a Home Rule Bill, which requires very different qualities. There are other persons in Ireland—leading business and professional men, and more especially workers on social problems—who might be expected to possess those qualities; but so far as I am aware none of them was consulted by the Government and none volunteered any suggestion. If the historian accepts Mr. Balfour's dictum that everybody is in a hole, he will, not unlikely, account for the unhappy circumstance by saying that everybody was in the wrong.

The urgent necessity of a settlement.

However this may be, during the present year the crisis has been getting more and more acute, and the Irish Question, which had ceased to interest and had begun to

bore the world, has once more leaped into the foremost place in the politics of the United Kingdom. Public opinion had become thoroughly alarmed. The sacrifices the Ulster Covenanters had made to defend their civil and religious liberties from the destruction with which they believed these were threatened, the efficiency of their military preparations, their discipline and restraint won admiration, even from those who wholly disagreed with their attitude. No doubt was any longer felt as to the formidable character of their resistance to Home Rule or the sincerity of the convictions by which it was inspired. On the other hand, it was recognised that the Government, definitely pledged to set up Home Rule in Ireland, could not, without fatal effects upon the authority of Parliament and so upon the social and political system which that authority sustains, yield to the threats of the Ulster Covenanters. On all sides the conviction grew that, unless some settlement was quickly reached, not only Ireland but the United Kingdom and the Empire would be faced with the gravest dangers.

The larger issues of the Irish crisis.

I may, perhaps, be permitted here to recall my own estimate of the larger issues involved in the latest phase of the Irish Question. I quote from a special article published in *The Times* on February 10th of the present year:—

Political power in England is rapidly passing to the masses, and the conviction is growing that our economic and social system has been ordered by the few and is unfair to the many. To this cause competent observers attribute the growing spirit of lawlessness which is to-day one of the gravest features in the life of these islands. At such a time the open defiance of constituted authority by responsible persons, no matter whose the blame, must gravely imperil the existing institutions of the United Kingdom, in defence of which the Ulstermen with absolute sincerity avow they are prepared to sacrifice their lives.

Passing from domestic affairs to international relations, it is common knowledge that Europe to-day is an armed camp, in which peace is hardly preserved by the ability of England to hold the balance of power between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. Both in France and Russia it is assumed that the Ulster crisis means the hideous anachronism of a religious war, an emergency which it is thought would render England incapable of taking her proper place, and precipitate that Armageddon which disturbs the dreams of this generation. Who can measure the consequences of an impression abroad that the British Army is going to be fully occupied with a domestic conflict in which a large number of officers now serving with the colours will be arrayed against the Crown?

Again, British rule in India, where serious unrest is becoming chronic, is notoriously dependent upon our military strength. I am told, by those who should know, that rebellion in the British Isles would certainly incite many to follow the dangerous example of appealing to force for a remedy of political grievances.

Looking farther afield, and yet in a sense nearer home, it is beyond question that civil strife in Ireland would have deplorable consequences wherever considerable numbers of the Irish race are to be found. I have just returned from the United States, and I am in a position to say that the re-opening of Irish sores would seriously embarrass those who are engaged on either side in the friendly settlement of all open questions between the British Empire and the Western Republic. Transatlantic anti-English movements are steadily declining, but it requires only a very small minority, if they are sufficiently determined, to thwart diplomatic negotiations, and some German-Irish activities illustrate the truth that hate will take people as far out of their way as love. Those who know Canada and Australasia tell me that the current efforts making for the consolidation of the Empire need for their fruition the cordial co-operation of a people peculiarly gifted for such a task. It would be a happy issue from Ireland's troubles if their cessation were to fulfil the hope of an English-speaking alliance now that the English-speaking people are celebrating their century of peace.

The search for a settlement by consent.

On the day when this letter was published the seriousness of the crisis was emphasised and the situation considerably relieved by an intervention, as unexpected as it was welcome. At the opening of Parliament the King, in a memorable departure from precedent, implored the representatives of his people "of all parties and creeds" to "lay the foundations of a lasting settlement," and much has been attempted in response to His Majesty's appeal. The Government at once promised concessions and invited negotiations. The tone and temper of the debates in Parliament were markedly improved and some men rose above party in their anxiety to help. In the Press men of ideas and of affairs, from poets to pro-consuls, applied their imaginations and experience to the search for a path to peace. The clouds broke, and while those of us who knew Ireland from within foresaw much confusion and delay from the multitude of counsellors who had for the first time been brought into touch with the realities of the Irish Question, there was a general feeling that some settlement was imminent.

These hopes were shattered by one of those untoward incidents which too often break the hearts of men who live and work for Ireland. It came to be believed that while some members of the Cabinet were waving olive branches, others favoured, and were actually preparing for, an end of argument and a resort to shot and shell. As if the question of Irish Government were not sufficiently complex, it got tangled up with the relations between Parliament and the Army, the King himself being dragged into the controversy. The "plot" was indignantly denied. Mr. Asquith and Colonel Seely happily put an end to all misunderstanding about the King, and the attempt to implicate the Army in party politics was finely met by Mr. Herbert Samuel's courageous avowal that he "would far rather see the Liberal Party beaten on other issues than win on this."

The partition of Ireland examined.

The worst of the irrelevant issues with which the question of Home Rule had been distorted and embittered having thus been removed, we come to the Amending Bill. This measure embodies the promised concessions, and attempts, not with conspicuous success, to make them workable. The Lords have turned a temporary into a permanent measure with a full knowledge that it is bad legislation. But they do not, I think, realise, what I hope to make clear, how the whole policy of exclusion conflicts with every sound principle of Irish progress and how its acceptance by Ulster will in calmer moments be regarded by these very people whose wishes it is supposed to meet.

Looking first at the economic aspects of the question I may take the broad ground that geographically Ulster in all its parts is one with Ireland and such, in spite of all political contrivances, it will remain. That a portion of one nation linked politically to another country and out of sympathy with its own could maintain a healthy economic existence is inconceivable. It is generally true that the economic life of a community is drawn from, and dependent on, the country with which nature has identified it, and that it can no more create its prosperity for itself or import it from abroad than it can create or import its atmosphere. The stream of life must come to the tree from the soil in which its root fibres are spread; it cannot draw the material of vital growth from a body to which it is artificially attached. Belfast as an emporium of Irish trade, as a banking centre of Irish finance, has guarantees of permanent and ever-growing greatness which, as an English or Scottish seaport town, it could not hope to possess. The fact that the coal and much of the raw material used in Ulster manufactures comes across the sea does not alter the principle laid down. Ireland, like every other civilised country, has its two sides—the agricultural or rural, the industrial and

commercial. Upon the working together of these for mutual advantage the prosperity of the country depends.

The disastrous effects upon Irish progress.

These views are not mere theorising; they underlie a quarter of a century of practical work in Ireland by men, many of whom have devoted their best working years to the building up of the economic life of the people. To most of these men this particular work is far less interesting or attractive than would be social or political movements. But they hold it to be of paramount importance at the present stage in the development of our country. In agricultural Ireland they have succeeded in uniting North and South in a common movement which has profoundly affected not only the economic, but the social—and some would add the moral and intellectual—condition of the people. They have had the immense satisfaction of finding that the progress of the thousand agricultural co-operative societies they have organised has not been interfered with in the slightest degree in any part of Ireland. Nor have the mutually helpful relations between the Northern and Southern leaders of the movement been in any way changed by the political troubles through which the country is passing. Part of their ambition is to develop the internal trade of the country and the interchange of commodities between the urban manufacturers and the rural producers. Through a large agricultural production they are raising the standard of living and increasing the consumption of all kinds of commodities by the most numerous part of the population. By strengthening the financial position of the farmers they are making more Irish agricultural capital available for the needs of the industrial population. In the partition of their country they see the undoing of much of their work, and they have good reason to fear that exclusive trade policies in the two Irelands will take the place of the growing co-operation between them, to the lasting injury of both. But

even this aspect of exclusion by no means presents the policy in its worst light from a self-respecting Ulsterman's point of view.

The desertion of Southern by Northern Unionists.

I do not think that the Northern advocates of exclusion have realised how, should they succeed in obtaining this concession, their action will be regarded by those who are in religious and political sympathy with them in other parts of Ireland. These people are not consoled by being told that a Protestant régime in Ulster is a guarantee of their fair treatment, on the assumption that the Catholics of Belfast will be virtually hostages for themselves. As a matter of fact they have no fear of religious persecution. But they remember how in the Home Rule struggles of 1886 and 1893 the Ulster Unionists stood forth as champions of the scattered minorities of their co-religionists in the South and West, and how that was their chief claim to the world's regard. The situation has changed since then, but the help of Ulster is no less necessary to the South than formerly. Moreover, the Ulster Covenant, in its opening sentence, declares the solemn conviction that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of the whole of Ireland. It would seem to follow that, if their own interests are saved, the rest of the country may be allowed to suffer material disaster.

There is just one other aspect of Ulster's claim "to be left alone" which I do not think has been sufficiently considered. If the Unionists in the South and West have ceased to be worthy of their Northern fellow-countrymen's concern, what of the Empire whose unity is one of the objects mentioned prominently in the Covenant? Its signatories have always held that the safety of the Empire depends fundamentally upon the integrity of the United Kingdom. In substance, apart from form, would not the exclusion of Ulster be, from their own point of view, almost as great an outrage upon this

constitutional integrity as the actual Home Rule proposal of the Government which they so emphatically condemn? I shall refuse to believe that the Ulster Unionists are prepared to desert a quarter of a million of their fellow-countrymen whose cause they formerly held to be as sacred as their own. Ulster, regardless of her own immediate interests, stood by Ireland in her darkest days, and I cannot bring myself to doubt that the older patriotism yet lives within her. If this be so, whatever settlement may be ultimately reached, it will be for one Ireland and not for two.

Other settlements considered.

We may now consider briefly the principal suggestions surviving from the multitude of schemes which the search for a settlement by consent has brought to public notice. When Mr. Asquith produced the Government's concessions he announced his own preference for Home Rule within Home Rule, suggested by Sir Edward Grey and since worked out with great constructive skill by Lord MacDonnell. Meanwhile the Federalists and Devolutionists have been busily at work on a number of schemes not yet very clearly defined. Conferences and conventions have been demanded by such a variety of leading men as the Archbishop of York, Mr. William O'Brien and Lord Dunraven. Lord Dunraven's scheme (now accepted by the House of Lords) proposes the postponement of all action until a commission has reported upon the constitutional relations which ought to subsist between the component parts of the United Kingdom.

The plan of Home Rule within Home Rule would probably be accepted by the Government forces and by the Nationalists; it would certainly be rejected by Ulster, and it is, in my view, open to the general objections I have urged against exclusion, though in a less degree. To all the plans of Devolution, Federation and Suspension, each no doubt admirable in itself, one objection may be taken: none of

them meets the exigencies of the immediate situation. Some would be rejected by the Home Rule coalition for the simple reason that they break the bond which holds it together. All of them leave utterly unsatisfied the Home Rule sentiment in Ireland and, what is to my mind—I might almost say within my own knowledge—equally important, the sentiment of the great majority of the Irish people in the United States and throughout the Empire. They would leave Ireland for a longer or shorter period under the martial law which the Government has allowed to be set up in Ulster, and which will soon be established throughout the three Southern provinces. For none of these settlements will lead to the disarming of both volunteer forces, and one will not disarm without the certainty of its example being immediately followed by the other.

Just one other consideration. One of the paradoxes of the Irish Question has always been that the supposed unfitness of the Irish for self-government was an equally strong argument for and against Home Rule. In the minor departments of government the Irish have learned a great deal more in recent years than is generally realised. But thought upon the problems of national government has been prevented on the Unionist side by refusal to consider it, and on the Nationalist side by the illusion common to all democracies whose constitutional desires are unsatisfied, that institutions can make a people happy independently of the character and capacity of those it selects to work them. It is this backward state of political thought which has brought me to the conclusion that there is only one statesman-like way of dealing with the crisis, and that is for both parties in Ireland to come together and learn by actual experiment, honestly and fairly tried, upon what terms and conditions they can jointly govern it. I am convinced that during such a trial as I am advocating the present Home Rule Bill, or any other which the wit of man can now devise, will be transformed out of all recognition by Irish

thought and feeling brought for the first time into touch with the realities of government. We shall then be able to test the merits of the many good suggestions which have been made for overcoming the difficulties with which the problem is surrounded.

The better way.

My proposal, slightly changed from its original form, remains not a settlement but a threefold plan for discovering a settlement. First, Home Rule, instead of being applied to the three Southern provinces, must be extended to the whole of Ireland. The province of Ulster must be allowed, after a stated period, long enough to give the experiment a fair trial and to establish the traditions of good government, to vote itself out if the majority so desire. In this contingency alone is the "clean cut" policy admissible; for I quite agree that it is far better to have Ulster as one unit and the rest of Ireland as another if the country is to be divided at all. An independent and impartial tribunal should be established with powers to allow this option of permanent exclusion to be exercised at any earlier period, upon its being proved to their satisfaction, at the instance of the Ulster Unionist representatives in the Irish House of Commons, that Ulster was suffering from misgovernment, or that permanent injury to its economic interests was reasonably apprehended. The judicial committee of the English Privy Council would be a quite satisfactory tribunal. But, although they would merely be required to decide, if called upon, whether a case had been made for ante-dating the exercise of this statutory option, the issue might at the time it was submitted be the subject of acute political controversy. So it might be preferable to agree upon three, five or seven individuals to form a commission *ad hoc*. The second part of my plan only comes into operation when this principle of temporary inclusion has been accepted. Then a conference of representative Irish-

men, the constitution of which might be left to Mr. Redmond and Sir Edward Carson, should meet to discuss amendments to the Home Rule Bill which both sides might agree to press upon the Government.

The military part of the plan developed.

The third part would be universally welcomed if the other two were adopted. The Ulster and the National Volunteers should be invited by the Army Council to contribute members to an Irish Territorial Force and then during the period of option, both the Volunteer forces should be disbanded. I will indicate some of the reasons for this suggestion and the method by which it would be carried out. It is well known that this particular branch of the country's defences urgently needs to be strengthened. I have it on the highest military authority that any contribution made from the force which has been organised during the last two years in Ulster would, relatively to other Territorials in the United Kingdom, be regarded as an exceptionally opportune and effective addition to our defensive resources. The National Volunteers have quite as good fighting material in the rank and file, and only need time and officers to make the force a worthy complement to the splendid regiments from whose reservists they are largely recruited.

For the defence of the United Kingdom, in case of war, we rely on the Navy, the Regular Army, the Special Reserve, and the Territorial Force. But the Navy, if it is to fulfil its mission, must be at liberty to deal with the enemy's fleets wherever they may be. The Regular Army will be required, almost in its entirety, for service abroad, and the object of the Special Reserve, which is some 20,000 below its proper strength, is to relieve the Regular Army in oversea garrisons and to train and find reinforcements to take the place of casualties in the Regular Army. It is therefore evident that, in the event of our being engaged in a European war, we must depend mainly on the Territorial

Force for the protection of the United Kingdom from an invading force. The Secretary of State for War has stated in the House of Commons that at the present time the Territorial Force is twenty per cent., that is 60,000 men, below establishment, in which establishment Ireland is not represented. This appears to be a slur upon Ireland; it is undoubtedly a weakness to the Empire. If the best of the Ulster Volunteers and the National Volunteers were officially recognised and incorporated in the Army as an Irish Territorial Force, armed, equipped and maintained under the same conditions as their comrades in England, what an asset they would be to the armed force of the nation! And they would give confidence to their countrymen in North and South alike that their rights would be respected, since they could at any moment assert them with the same force as at present.

There would seem to be no difficulty in effecting the contemplated transfer of Volunteers to the Territorial Force. That Force is organised by counties, the units in each county being recruited, administered and maintained by a committee of local gentlemen, known as a County Association. The expenses incurred by the Associations for raising, equipping and maintaining the units for which they are responsible are paid by the Government under the prescribed regulations. The regimental officers, non-commissioned officers and men are local volunteers; instructors and a few general officers to fill the higher commands are supplied by the regular Army. So far as the organisation of the Ulster and the National Volunteers is known, it could readily be fitted into this scheme.

Such is my plan. In a situation where every man of sense and feeling knows that there must be sacrifices all round, the sacrifice asked of either side in Ireland is surely not unreasonable. The Irish minority are asked to risk some temporary inconvenience with ample provision against any serious permanent injury, and to stand by their co-religionists in the South and West of Ireland in the starting

of Home Rule. They are asked to give the majority an opportunity of showing that they have both the will and the capacity to establish, with the help of the Ulster leaders, a government fair alike to Catholic and Protestant, to the rural and urban interests and to the Irish and Scot-Irish sentiment. The Irish majority are asked to recognise and guarantee the right of the whole province of Ulster to revert to its former constitutional position should it, after a fair trial, wish to do so. I regard the concession asked of the majority as being far greater than that which the minority would have to make. Yet it is only by the Ulster Covenanters that any serious objections to the plan have been taken. The chief of these I will state and meet.

Ulster's four chief reasons against a trial of a United Ireland stated and answered: (1) The Covenant.

It has been said that the Covenant forbids acceptance. I do not so interpret its terms. The signatories are bound to resist the imposition of Home Rule upon Ulster, but there is nothing to prevent them from giving it voluntarily a trial upon the lines suggested. If I am right in this some of the arguments that I have used against exclusion will, I trust, be considered by the Covenanters as making a case for this concession to the wishes of their co-religionists in the three Southern provinces, to say nothing of the service they would be rendering to their country.

(2) The dislocation of business

It is generally believed by Ulstermen, who are not and never have been in touch with the life of the South and West, that these backward communities, who in virtue of their numbers would dominate an all-Ireland Parliament, are wholly unfitted for self-government, if not incapable of learning the art. It is feared that, even during the experimental period when unquestionably these wild people would be on their best behaviour, a body so predominantly

agricultural would not have any knowledge of the problems of the industrial and commercial communities in the North-East corner of the island. And here I feel that the strongest case which Ulster has against Home Rule has not been given sufficient prominence by their own representatives, and has for that reason been very little considered by outsiders. Let me put the case as it appears to me.

The business men of the North of Ireland say that the industry and commerce, which they have built up in a portion of the country not specially favoured by any physical advantages, has attained its present position through the exercise of qualities which are not to be found among the inhabitants of the three Southern provinces, or in the Western part of Ulster. Their shipbuilding and linen industries hold their own in competition with the most advanced manufacturing communities of the world; but it is a hard struggle and the position can only be maintained under conditions of settled government dominated by economic ideas which prevail in the great industrial and commercial country whose legislature now governs them. What hope, they ask, is there of the public credit of the proposed Irish Parliament ranking with that of the Imperial Exchequer? Would not the commercial credit of Belfast, a deciding factor in their business, be depressed with the lowering of the country's credit?

Apart from this general apprehension, specific legislative and administrative measures detrimental to Ulster interests are feared. Even supposing that such questions as factory legislation were not controlled by the representatives from Belfast and other Northern centres of industry, the incidence of taxation might be made to favour agriculture and oppress manufacture. Perhaps the railways might be nationalised and a similar discrimination might be shown in the fixing of rates. The public moneys expended in technical education, statistics and other matters of immense economic importance might neglect the urban and favour the rural

producer. Possibly industries might be artificially fostered in non-industrial parts of the country by a system of bonuses provided by the general taxpayer. Assuming incompetence or unfairness, and that the Ulstermen affected had ceased to protect themselves against an Irish Parliament as they are now prepared to do against a much more powerful combination, it would be easy for ingenuity to predict the decline and fall of everything which the spirit of Ulster has made to stand. Against this, and all similar dangers which might be suggested, my plan, especially since I have added the provision for exclusion at any moment should the anticipated evils arise, provides a remedy. The remedy of exclusion, if applied, would satisfy Ulster's demand to be let alone but it would be fatal to the hopes of a United Ireland. I will give the grounds for my belief that it would never be applied.

The rural communities in the South and West of Ireland are, it may be admitted, still backward socially, economically and politically; no reader of Irish history could expect them to be otherwise. But I doubt whether any body of citizens in the Empire has made an advance in all these respects at all comparable to that which I have observed after spending the last quarter of a century in the most intimate touch with their working lives. I suppose if I refer again to the agricultural organisation movement it will be thought that I have got it on the brain. But it may be fairly claimed that this movement has given a lead to the English-speaking world on the problem of rural reconstruction, not only in ideas but in methods. And what better illustration could be found of a people's administrative capacity than the way in which they work together in matters of production, distribution and finance relating to the industry by which they live? Here I see thousands of men acting together, irrespective of creed and party, looking at the matter in hand, whatever it may be, from a purely business point of view, estimating their leaders and colleagues not according to their oratorical gifts, but by the solid contribution that they make

to the material welfare of their associations. Nothing better could be conceived as a corrective to the besetting sins of Irish politics, and the effects of this movement are already noticeable in every department of Irish public life.

If I were to compare the working of the co-operative societies in Ulster and in the other parts of Ireland, I should admit at once that effective business administration is to be found most widely diffused in Ulster. But the Southern Irish have displayed certain other qualities, essential to the success of any public movement, with which I do not think they are usually credited. These men of the South are, in the first place, quick to apprehend the general principles of co-operation; secondly, when once interested they identify themselves with the movement and take pride in its success in Ireland as compared with other countries; and, finally, when properly approached they show the most disinterested generosity in communicating the benefits of their organisation to others. And these qualities of quick apprehension, public spirit and generosity are precisely those which are necessary to make the experiment of a United Ireland succeed.

The same moral in another and equally striking shape is pointed by the only other public movement in which representatives of the whole Irish people have been united in modern times for constructive work, namely the establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction as a result of the recommendations of the Recess Committee of 1895. The representatives of Ulster on that Committee did precisely what the best men of Ireland expect the representatives of Ulster to do now. While retaining their power of independent action, they united with the members from the rest of Ireland to think out a scheme for the common good of the whole country. The result was the starting of an engine of government which has conferred immense benefits, both material and moral, on Ireland. And this Department of Agriculture and Technical

Instruction, if its structure and working are examined, will be found to differ very greatly from other Government departments, and to bear striking resemblance in many respects to the government which would have to be set up under Home Rule. It is, unlike any other Irish or British institution of Government, democratically constituted. It depends in its most important work on the voluntary assistance of local authorities. It is concerned with the everyday business by which the people gain their living. Finally, it has (through the County Committees resulting from popular election) to hold the balance, in relation to very contentious questions of pecuniary contributions, between one locality and another. While far from claiming that the administration of the Department has been faultless, least of all during its first seven years when I was chiefly responsible for it, I do claim, and I believe every Ulsterman acquainted with its working will acknowledge, that this body, controlled in its working by a majority of Southern Irishmen, has behaved, on the whole, with justice and intelligence.

Good feeling and good sense are the main qualities required to make Home Rule work, and to prevent damage to the business interests of any part of the country. The Southern Irish have displayed these qualities conspicuously in the management of the two great organisations covering the whole country; is there any reason to believe that they will not display them again if the opportunity is offered? I can conceive no task I should enter upon with greater confidence of success than organising a movement in agricultural Ireland for making the people understand the duty and wisdom of meeting every reasonable demand of the industrial classes for every facility and protection they need in the building up of their side of the National life.

(3) *The religious objection.*

The third objection may be summarised in the well-known formula "Home Rule means Rome Rule," that is,

it will result in oppression of Protestants and tyranny by a priestly caste. It is strange but true that many devout Catholics fear that it will lead to anti-clericalism and to attacks on their Church similar to those which have taken place on the Continent. I believe both these fears to be unfounded. Protestants who live among the Catholic population in the South of Ireland, and observe their tolerance and their devotion to their Church, do not expect that a political change will destroy either of these characteristics. Such cases of intolerance as are cited are usually found—if true—to have a social or political and not a religious basis. Considering both the example of other countries and the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, I anticipate that under Home Rule the people will retain their faith and the Catholic Church all its legitimate influence. But Catholic laymen throughout Ireland will be led by their new political duties to draw distinctions between the ecclesiastical and political spheres which they do not at present recognise. They will thus gradually relieve the priesthood of a class of responsibilities from which all the more judicious priests will be very glad to escape. It must be remembered that the Irish Catholic priests took no part in politics until they were brought in by O'Connell to assist in the fight for Emancipation, and that the Land War and the struggles for Home Rule have forced many of them into a position of political leadership for which their training has in no way fitted them. They were compelled to lead the people in the direction in which the people wished to go, or else be cast aside. It is no wonder if some of them, sympathising as they necessarily did with the ideas of the class to which they belonged, acted in a manner unfitting the priestly character. They will not be too harshly condemned by any fair-minded Protestant who reflects upon the part which the clergy of his own faith have felt it their duty to play in recent events.

(4) *The rest of Ireland "disloyal."*

The last objection is that the Home Rulers are bitterly anti-English, that every concession to them is regarded as a step towards their ultimate goal of separation, and that "Ireland a Nation," whatever it may mean, involves a suppression of every national aspiration which Ulster men cherish. The Northern Protestants are rightly proud of their loyalty to the Crown, and they refuse to be associated in government with those who have exhibited sympathy with the King's enemies. They cite the "two voices" of this or that prominent politician, and ask what trust can be placed in such men or their followers. Nor do they believe that the representatives of Nationalist Ireland will ever change. Often, when I have told my story of the new Ireland down South to the incredulous Northern, the reply has come:—"Can the leopard change his spots"—a strange question to ask about political leopards.

I admit fully that it is easier here to make the case than to answer it—the only real answer is in deeds, and hence my plan. While the sentiments to which Ulster very properly objects find blatant expression, they do not represent any effective body of opinion. The great majority of Irishmen are sick of merely factious politics, and are taking to industry. To represent cheers at the defeat of the British (and, incidentally, of the Irish) troops in the Boer War as proofs of the attitude of the Irish majority to-day towards England and the Empire is about as fair as is the use made of some foolish man's talk about "kicking the Queen's crown into the Boyne," in order to demonstrate that Ulster, whatever her protestations of loyalty, is rootedly disloyal. I have nothing to say in defence of a man who speaks with two voices, though it would be a hard world where allowances were not made for politicians, anxious to please their hearers, who have to address audiences with two minds. There was a generation of Irish Nationalists to whom hatred of England, due to well-known causes, was the best recom-

mendation. There are remnants of this generation still, who would cease to trouble if any reasonable concession to Irish political desires were made. There are also many who talk this language of hatred without much conviction because it has become a habit. Finally there is a younger generation who, if I know anything at all of my countrymen, would resent this kind of talk bitterly if it stood in the way of friendly relations between North and South.

The attitude of Ulster.

I have now met the main objections which those Ulstermen who have discussed it seriously have taken to my Irish way out of a crisis which, although primarily Irish, has deeply stirred the British Empire and the Continent of Europe wherever the wider issues involved are understood. I am painfully aware that no reasoning will remove the real obstacle to the acceptance of my plan. To all such arguments as I have used above the Covenanters make the simple and, in their eyes, sufficient answer—"We won't have it." These words—the crisis in a nutshell—have excited feelings ranging from wrath to admiration. It is interesting to observe how they have impressed the typical Englishman who has made first-hand inquiry on the spot. From totally ignoring Ulster, he has now been converted to thinking that Ulster is all that counts in Ireland. Such men had refused to believe that the animosities of the seventeenth century could have survived in a people whose industrial occupations bring them into the stream and under the influences of modern progress the world over. They had laughed at Sir Edward Carson and his "bigots," and indulged in such scintillating wit at his expense as "wooden guns and wouldn't fight." They were too much amused to be very angry at the "monstrous bluff." Now they have flown to the other extreme. Sir Edward Carson, they say, is the one leader who, in the most confused situation in living memory, has known exactly where he stood

and what he wanted. The men—and the women—he leads, in these days of cynical opportunism and general unconcern for public affairs, are in dead earnest and have backed their words, which are few, with an amazing sufficiency of deeds. Ulster will fight, and Ulster *must* be right, for men with their record of achievement in practical life do not make such sacrifices to preserve their civil and religious liberties without *knowing* that these are really at stake. So our converts re-cross the Irish sea and tell their fellow-countrymen that the “clean cut” is the only possible alternative to civil war.

The pride of the Covenanters.

Between these two views, both English, there is an Irish view which I believe to be so wholly true that it must ultimately prevail. That some people in Ulster are bluffing and that more are using a genuine, if not altogether well-directed, enthusiasm for purposes very remote from the real interests of Ulster, I am quite aware. On the other hand, I have never for a moment doubted the sincerity of the Covenanters' belief in the righteousness of their cause nor minimised the sacrifices they are prepared to make in its defence. They are the proudest people that I know. They believe themselves—a belief not without some confirmation from the respective parts played in the present crisis—superior to the English, whose assumption of superiority has not made them popular abroad. And they have a right to be proud of qualities which have enabled them to enrich a part of Ireland by no means greatly favoured by nature—qualities which have made their impress upon civilisation in every portion of the globe. Their concentrated effort has gained additional strength from the narrowness of its channel, and as the one party who in this chaos of opinion know their own mind, they have attained a position which convinces the outside observer that no settlement, good, bad or indifferent, will suffice if it does not satisfy Ulster.

And, as a not uninformed observer from within, I am quite willing to admit that this is the truth. But it is not the whole truth. The South of Ireland also exists, and its aspirations must in some way be satisfied. Constitutional agitation, continued through many years, has convinced the majority of the English nation that the claim of the majority of the Irish nation must be allowed, and the unhappy circumstances of the present time have induced the Southern Irish to pass beyond constitutional methods and to prove that it is not only in the North that violent measures can be taken. Nevertheless, the Ulster problem is the more pressing, and we may all agree that it is impossible to coerce, and is now extremely difficult to win, Ulster.

Ireland's appeal to the Ulster Leaders.

Yet Ulster must be won, for her own sake most of all. Neither I nor any of those whom Lord Lansdowne has invited to show a better way can make the slightest impression on the rank and file of the Ulster Volunteers. But, knowing Sir Edward Carson and many of the Northern leaders as I do, I decline to believe that they will turn a deaf ear to any honest argument or hesitate, at whatever personal risk, to put before their humbler followers, who cannot possibly have any adequate understanding of the effect on the world of Ulster's decision at this crisis, the full extent of their responsibility. If a clear case is made I shall rely upon those who have taken up arms to show that they possess the higher quality of courage it will require to lay them down. To the Ulster Leaders, then, let me put the case of Ireland as I see it, after a quarter of a century spent in striving for the realisation of an ideal which it is theirs to-day to make or mar.

That ideal is a country united not only as nature has united it, but in those other respects which depend upon the character, capacity and sentiment of its citizens. The foundations of such an Ireland have been laid by intense

labour during recent years, some of the very best of the workers being Ulster Covenanters. One of the first essential conditions of such a union is that the Ulster qualities, which were seen in their highest manifestation in the Thomas Andrews who built the Titanic, and went down with her, should be not confined to part of Ireland but should be at the service of the whole. I would not have this service rendered otherwise than freely and with a whole heart; and if it ceased to fulfil its purpose I would, as I have explained, let those who render it withdraw. But to refuse to render it now, to say to us in the South and West that we are not capable of understanding those matters in which the life of the North-east corner of Ireland differs from that of the island outside, is justified only by ignoring changes which have taken place among the majority of the Irish people—an ignorance as inexcusable as the English ignorance of Ulster to which I have already adverted. I say English because Ulster is perfectly well understood throughout the three southern provinces where we have always been much better critics of other peoples' characters than of our own. I can say with absolute certainty that, if Ulster would now throw in her lot with Ireland she would find herself received with a generous enthusiasm which would last because it is founded in respect. The chief thing Ireland, North and South, has got to learn, and in my belief would quickly learn, is that differences in qualities or in temperament, so far from making union impossible are, given the statesmanship required to fuse the different elements, the best of all guarantees of a truly organic union. A highly organised nation, like one of the higher animals, lives and thrives because its several parts are different and adapted to different functions.

Two Pictures.

One word more. With the new factors in Irish life we could, if driven thereto, set up an agricultural Ireland out-

side of Ulster—that "second Denmark" which before a united Ireland began to take its place was our aim; and Ulster might use her power to stand aloof as a predominantly industrial country—a sort of Belgium. But is it not a victory which might turn to dust and ashes? Is it certain that the industrial and commercial system which centres in Belfast is so firmly established, and so surely buttressed against the world-wide competition in which it is engaged, that it could stand the shock of separation, whose possible consequences I have ventured to indicate? It would be an awful outcome of the proud position the Covenanters have won, if their children, gazing upon the scene of their fathers' deeds in peace and in war were driven to lament:—

Lo! all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre.

Let me put a brighter picture before these men of Ulster. In an Irish Parliament, into which they will not have been driven but will have voluntarily come, rightly retaining their freedom of exit should the institution fail, they will exercise a controlling influence in all matters affecting that part of the life of Ireland which by virtue of their qualities they dominate to-day. They will have rendered a service to civilisation which will bring to them a pride and a satisfaction richly rewarding them for every sacrifice they have made through these troublous times. To them it will have been due that Ireland has become a deciding factor in the peace of Europe and in the upholding of the Empire. For, by adopting during the experimental period the territorial scheme, they will directly and indirectly have enormously strengthened the defences of the United Kingdom, and will have largely removed the difficulty of our military authorities in holding the balance of power in Europe. Ireland, consciously and collectively, will be doing for the Empire what her sons individually have always done, sometimes for, sometimes

against the Empire. The Covenanters will see the preparations they have made for war, with marvellous zeal, devotion and efficiency, turned to the nobler purposes of a lasting peace. A dark chapter in Irish history will be closed; and our children's children will read with pride how one of our oldest legends came true—how the man of the North won the woman of the South and a new Ireland was born.

2. CH 66

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